



SMU in Four – SMU’s Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) – is the University’s comprehensive approach to improving SMU’s retention and four-year graduation rates. Over the last five years, 73% of our undergraduate students graduate in four years, and we have consistent gaps across race and socio-economic status. We need everyone’s help to improve the graduation rate and to close these equity gaps. To this end, SMU in Four strategies build upon existing University practices to address the needs of all SMU students and ultimately lead them to greater levels of success. One such existing University practice is the use of our campus’s course management system, Canvas. A key step in the SMU in Four plan for the fall of 2021 is to continue making use of Canvas to support our students.

The plan below was built by a team of faculty and administrators from all five undergraduate schools. In addition, we paid close attention to Student Senate Resolution S-106-14 which asks for greater standardization across Canvas courses and consistent employment of basic features.

Starting this fall, all 3-credit courses offered as part of the undergraduate curriculum (with the exception of independent studies) are required to include three technical features of Canvas to meet our goals:

- Syllabus tool to post the course information so that students have access to all of their course syllabi on Canvas.
- Calendar tool so that students can keep up to date on assignment due dates and other time-sensitive course information such as when exams are scheduled.
- Gradebook tool to record grades so that that students have access to their ongoing progress.

To help you support these elements of the SMU in Four initiative, we have asked the Office of Information Technology (OIT) to create a new, simplified [web support portal](#) that includes detailed help guides as well as a schedule of upcoming support and training events. A coordinated communications plan will commence in July to inform you of support and help options as you prepare for fall 2021. In addition, the Center for Teaching Excellence (CTE) is available to provide deep instructional design and teaching support to assist you with fall

semester planning. If you need any help at all, please do not hesitate to reach out early!

Based on our experiences from the last many months, we are well equipped to leverage Canvas' technology tools to better orient all modes of instruction to the academic needs and expectations of our students. I know we will help SMU make significant progress on important SMU in Four retention initiatives and appreciate your support.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Elizabeth G. Loba', written in a cursive style.

Elizabeth G. Loba, PhD
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